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CHAPTER VIII

Marriage and Divorce

MARRIAGE

582 A Badawin is not allowed to marry:

The divorced wife of his son.
His son's widow.
His wife's mother.
His brother's daughter.
His sister's daughter.
His foster sister.
A girl of a tribe that is considered inferior to his own, such as 'Awazim, Sana, Sulubba. (See Chapter VI and Appendix XIII.)

Inferior Badawin, of course, intermarry at will with other inferior tribes.

[162] The marriage laws among the Badawin tribes of Arabia are simple in the extreme and effectually settle the problem, so acute in the West, of what to do with the excess female population. Moreover, it should not be forgotten that in Arabia, owing to the interminable wars and intertribal hatreds that exist, women are and have always been greatly in excess of the men.

In the first place, marriage and divorce are extremely easy. Every youth on first reaching the age of manhood expects his parents to find a mate for him. Similarly a husband must be found for a girl the moment she reaches puberty.

684 582 First-cousin marriage is the invariable rule. A girl belongs of right to the son of her father's brother (*ibn 'ám*) unless he expressly renounces his right to marry her. Even in this case she may not marry without his permission. If the girl breaks this rule or her parents prevail on her to marry someone else, her rightful lord will murder her if he can. This is the cause of most of the tribal killings of women, especially in Iraq.

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Badawin Love Affairs

RIGHTS OF IBN 'ÁM

If a girl refuses to be wedded to her *ibn 'ám*, he may slay her without becoming liable to pay blood money in compensation. 684 582

If the *ibn 'ám* knows that his cousin does not want him, being already in love with someone else, he can forbid (*haiyyir 'alaiha*) the marriage, and the girl may die a spinster.

If a girl loves another and her father dies, she has a chance of getting her freedom from her *ibn 'ám* who is *haiyyiring* her ("hajjir" is the correct technical term for keeping her to himself), if she goes and begs her freedom immediately after her father's death: "My father has died, I want thee to release me in return for my father who has passed away", she says. In such case the *hajjir* is expected to be generous and release her—but he is not bound to do so. If he refuses her only remedy is to elope. She then flees with her lover to a distant land or tribe, and there marries him after putting herself and her husband under the protection of a shaikh. She remains in constant danger from her cousin, however. Her husband is considered as [627] guilty as a murderer and can only secure his life by the payment of blood money.

Should a Badawin elope with and marry a "white slave girl" (e.g. [588] Circassian, Georgian or Armenian) or a girl of inferior tribe (he can on no account marry a slave and defile the tribe's blood), he can never return again to his kin; they will kill him.

It is the duty of every Badawin to marry and procreate. The more 581 children he possesses, the more powerful his kinsmen. He would be expelled the tribe were he to refuse to do his duty in this respect. Without his kin a Badawin would be the most miserable of outcasts. Musil brings this out clearly in his book, *Manners and Customs of the Ruwala Bedouins.*

There are, of course, cases where a man sees a girl, not his cousin, and falls madly in love with her. If she herself is not bound to her *ibn 'ám* a regular courtship follows, the man finding opportunity of meeting when she is looking after the camels or the sheep, much as our own youths and maidens do. I have known very violent love affairs of this type, and the Badawin loses his head over his lass quite as much as the ordinary English youth, if not more.

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837 684 Again, as in the desert, immorality is practically unknown among unmarried girls. Married women on the contrary often indulge in clandestine intrigue. The penalty for immorality is death to the woman if she is found out. The woman's brothers and cousins always appear more concerned about their sister's honour than the father is, and if vengeance is to be carried out it is usually the brothers and cousins who track the woman down. As excuse they plead that they could not hold their heads up in tribal *majlis* if they had a sister living in dishonour. Marriage with the man who has led her astray is the only method that will save the girl's life. Even then the seducer must pay *hashm* or honour-money to satisfy the girl's relatives. A strange man sometimes takes the place of the seducer and can get the girl off punishment by marrying her, but this is not common. *Fasl* or *'idiyah* is the term given to blood money. Among the Iraq *Ma'adán* (marsh) tribes a girl-relative of a murderer is nearly always given to the brother or son of the murdered person, the idea being that a child from the union of two enemy houses allays any hatred that might remain.

585 Among the Arab tribes of Iraq, as opposed to the *Ma'adán* (marshmen), a man sets up a special tent or mat shelter called a *haufa* for his wife to be taken to immediately after marriage. This is close to his house or tent as the case may be, and corresponds to a honeymoon tent. After the bride is taken to this *haufa* by her women, the husband, arrayed in his best garments, is conveyed there by his men friends and consummates the marriage. The woman remains a prisoner in the *haufa* for seven days. The man, on the contrary, may come out and receive visitors in his *mudhif* or nearby guest-tent. On the eighth day the woman comes out of her *haufa*, goes into her new home and takes charge of the household duties. The custom of setting up the *haufa* tent applies only if the girl has never been married before. If she be a widow she goes straight to her husband's tent.

LOVE

831 595 I have often been asked if love, as we know it, exists among the Badawin. I have unhesitatingly replied that it does. The fact that a man is permitted to take more than a single wife has nothing to do with the matter. Indeed, it is rare to see a Badawin with more than